

How This Process Came About

One of the first things Governor Fletcher noticed upon taking office was the large number of state logos, slogans and messages that permeated state government. Since the Governor has put a priority on bringing more jobs and people to Kentucky, he raised the issue with Commerce Secretary W. James Host. It was something Host noticed, too.

“When (Economic Development Secretary) Gene Strong and I sat down to discuss how we were going to actively promote Kentucky to improve economic development, including tourism, the first thing that struck me was the lack of a single strategy and theme between Economic Development and Tourism, even though we are both about jobs,” Host said. “That made no sense. No business would operate that way.”

The fragmentation also has led to state government spending more than it should have on advertising and marketing efforts. “When we added up the advertising and marketing budgets across state government, it came to approximately \$14 million a year, divided among more than a dozen different advertising agencies,” Governor Fletcher said. Individually, the budgets weren’t large enough to negotiate lower commissions and fees or to leverage the state’s buying power to secure better media rates. Each agency received the standard 15 percent commission on advertising media buys as well as hourly creative and public relations fees of up to \$155. Kentucky was paying up to \$2.5 million a year in agency commissions and fees.

All advertising and marketing contracts were consolidated into one with the selection of New West, a Kentucky-based public relations, advertising and marketing firm. New West was awarded the contract after a comprehensive process during which state officials issued a request for proposals, reviewed qualifications from 18 applicant firms, and received oral presentations from seven of them. The final decision was based on scoring from judges in each cabinet in accordance with the RFP. Host and Secretary of Finance Robbie Rudolph then negotiated the final contract with the firm that scored best by the judges.

New West receives no advertising commission and no “markup” charges. The company receives one flat rate of \$95 per hour for all services performed. To date, the company has billed approximately \$400,000 in fees and advertising expenses.

“By eliminating past agency commissions and other charges, we are creating a brand for the state, marketing the commonwealth more effectively AND saving money in the process,” Governor Fletcher added.

Creating the Brand

From the day of the initial announcement, virtually every Kentuckian has had an opinion on what Kentucky's new brand should be. Governor Fletcher said in his announcement, "Our goal is to harness the pride and the passion Kentuckians have for our state, and showcase that pride to the rest of the world, so more businesses will want to locate here, more visitors will want to vacation here, and more people will want to live here."

So what *is* most important to people inside and outside Kentucky? Finding out took several steps.

The first step was to solicit citizen opinions in the state. More than 1,000 people visited the www.kentucky.gov Web site and gave their opinions on what made Kentucky stand out from other states. Among the most common responses: our beauty, our diverse terrain, our people, our quality of life, our strong feeling of "home," our love for horses, and our central location.

Next, New West conducted research in a variety of areas. More than 225 people in the tourism industry were asked their opinions. According to the tourism experts, Kentucky's beauty, parks, hospitality, cultural heritage and wildlife are strong attractions for the state.

National business leaders were quizzed about their impressions of Kentucky and the likelihood of their locating a business here. Kentucky was rated on par with most surrounding states, but lower than several. Business leaders said that changing Kentucky's image would significantly improve their perception of Kentucky as a business location.

Some 40 out-of-state consumers were then questioned about their knowledge of the state. Other than horses, those polled didn't know much about Kentucky.

Finally, dozens of Kentuckians participated in focus groups and were questioned individually about Kentucky's strengths and challenges. While our friendliness, heritage, pride and family scored high, there also was a feeling that Kentuckians are self-limiting. In other words, we take seriously the jokes people make about us and may not realize all that Kentucky has to offer.

Summarizing the research, here are key facts that became evident:

- Kentuckians too often sell themselves short
- Non-Kentuckians view Kentuckians through negative stereotypes, or not at all
- Kentuckians want to see themselves as progressive, but not at the expense of their heritage, environment or quality of life

Based on all this research, New West created and reviewed hundreds of potential logos and slogans (including those used by other states), tested dozens of different ideas in focus groups, adjusted and refined strategy, and finally selected four concepts for consideration. Governor Fletcher decided that, since Kentuckians had been so interested and involved in the process, they should have a vote in deciding Kentucky's new brand.

How to Judge the Brand

Choosing a brand is more than just selecting a pretty logo or a fancy slogan. The brand will become the state's image for years. It will be the first image visitors see when they enter the state, and it will signify how we as Kentuckians feel about this place we call home.

Here are the goals that have been set for the new brand:

- It should foster pride among Kentucky citizens
- It should cause people to think more positively about visiting or doing business in Kentucky
- It should attack negative stereotypes about Kentucky

So as you judge which brand most effectively communicates Kentucky's strengths to the world, look at each choice, using the following criteria:

- Is it unique?
- Does it suggest Kentuckians are progressive and forward-thinking?
- Is it easy to remember?
- Is it motivating?
- Is it long-lasting?